

J-1 Visa Waiver Program

WHAT IS THE J-1 VISA WAIVER PROGRAM?

The **J-1 Visa Waiver Program** is a federal program that enables foreign national physicians to improve access to primary care and other health services in federally designated shortage areas, either in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) or Medically Underserved Areas/Medically Underserved Populations (MUAs/MUPs).

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OF THE J-1 VISA WAIVER PROGRAM?

In October 1994, a federal law was enacted that authorized state health departments to sponsor J-1 Visa physicians to work in HPSAs or MUAs/MUPs. Currently, Maryland is allotted 30 slots for **J-1 Visa Waivers** each year. Of these 30 slots, five may be used for non-designated areas or for non-primary care specialties if the other requirements are met.

WHAT IS THE BASIS FOR A J-1 VISA WAIVER RECOMMENDATION?

In Maryland, the Primary Care Organization (PCO) in the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) processes requests for **J-1 Visa Waivers**. The recommendation of a waiver request by DHMH is dependent upon the physician and the medical practice meeting all federal and Maryland **J-1 Visa Waiver** eligibility requirements.

DHMH will give preference to those applications from:

- Primary care foreign national physicians in designated HPSAs and MUAs/MUPs;
- Medical practices in underserved communities;
- Medical practices that have a demonstrated historic commitment to serving the underserved; and
- Those medical practices that have had difficulty recruiting physicians because of their geographic location.

The Maryland Primary Care Organization (PCO) facilitates the **J-1 Visa Waiver Program**. Waivers are granted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. For more information, visit:

<http://www.fha.state.md.us/ohpp/pco/html/mdj1visawaiverprog.cfm>

Fact Sheet prepared by the Office of Health Policy and Planning, located in the Family Health Administration, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.



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